



European exchanges with Erasmus...

Igor Agbossou, Sophie Carel, Patrice Caro

► To cite this version:

Igor Agbossou, Sophie Carel, Patrice Caro. European exchanges with Erasmus...: Increasing university teachers' mobility to promote students' exchanges. Training & Employment, 2008, <http://www.cereq.fr/index.php/content/download/629/9887/file/trai79.pdf>. hal-00731659

HAL Id: hal-00731659

<https://hal.science/hal-00731659>

Submitted on 20 Feb 2014

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Training & Employment

European exchanges with Erasmus...

Increasing university teachers' mobility to promote students' exchanges

The Erasmus student exchange programme created 20 years ago is completely in line with the knowledge economy model adopted in Lisbon in March 2000, according to which Europe is expected to become "the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy" between now and the year 2010. Despite the incitements proposed in the European Union's policies, the undeniable popularity of the programme and the increasing numbers of students participating in exchange schemes, the initial objectives are far from having been met. University lecturers have also been taking very little advantage of European mobility programmes. Now at both European and national levels, students' mobility has been found to be correlated with that of their tutors. In view of this link, the teachers should surely be incited to become more mobile in order to promote greater numbers of exchanges between students.

Geographical mobility is still strongly associated with success and prestige in higher educational circles, and the European Union has obviously decided to promote mobility on the European scale. In 1999, the Bologna declaration created a European Higher Educational Space (EHES), within which cooperation was intended to occur between establishments to favour the geographical mobility of students and lecturers alike. In 2000, the Lisbon Council of Europe re-emphasized the importance of developing mobility at higher educational level. Since then, the European Union's institutions have been resolutely confirming the wish to favour mobility within the European space. The harmonisation of European higher educational policies has thus generated considerable competition between universities and regions attempting to attract candidates. Lively competition has been waged not only within the European Union, but also between the Union and other powers such as the United States and Japan. Although the geographical mobility of both university students and their lecturers is on the increase, it is still fairly limited and shows an unequal pattern of spatial distribution.

Mobility in higher education: a long-term challenge for Europe

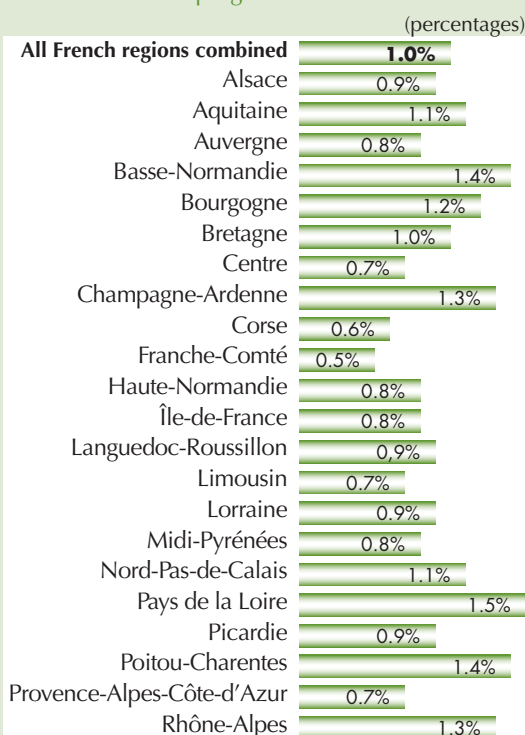
The first efforts made by the European Union to promote the mobility of university students and lecturers date back to the 50s. At that time, only highly qualified workers were subject to mobility. Starting in 1969, however, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg concluded after some deliberation that the time had come to promote greater mobility in higher educational circles. In parallel, higher education was becoming more accessible and more democratic. It was therefore naturally attempted to make European students more mobile, while improving international cooperation between establishments via bilateral agreements on the exchange of students and lecturers.

The first two European mobility programmes came into being during the 80s: COMETT, a vocational training programme promoting cooperation between universities and firms in the technological field, was launched in 1985, and ERASMUS was created in 1987 to encourage student mobility and inter-university cooperation. These two schemes were subsequently integrated into larger programmes, the Leonardo da Vinci programme, which focuses on continuing vocational training, and the Socrates programme for education. Many community programmes have also meanwhile developed to promote mobility, such as Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, the Bologna Promoters, the European Language Label and Europass.

In all these programmes, the stakes at play focused on how attractive the various systems of higher education were to students from other countries and at a more general level, on whether Europe was able to compete with other economic powers, such as the United States in particular, in the field of research and development. In this context, national systems of ●●●

■ Students showing mobility: the proportions

Numbers of French students participating in the Erasmus programme in 2004-2005



Data source: the European Union's Europe-Education-Training France Agency and the French Ministry for State Education.
Data processing: Céreq 2007

ECTS • European Credit Transfer System

LMD • The present structure of higher educational studies, based on three levels: the bachelor's degree (corresponding to a three-year course of study or 180 ECTS credits), the master's degree (corresponding to a five-year course of study or 300 ECTS credits), and the doctorat obtained after at least three years of research and the defence of a doctoral thesis.

... higher education and research have been officially requested to adapt to the European objectives for this purpose, they will have to join the European higher educational space, in line with the Bologna process launched in 1999 and adopt the 3-5-8 (or LMD) system, as well as adhering to the Lisbon objectives by making higher education a strategic channel enabling Europe to become "the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy". The idea of promoting greater mobility among university students and teachers is therefore intended to make European research worthy of becoming a real "knowledge society", as proposed in the Bologna declaration, and thus to favour students' transition to work on the European labour market. A consensus has been reached by now among human and

social science specialists that mobility is no longer the prerogative of an elite group, and that it has become a factor favouring young people's employability. The goals are nevertheless rather ambitious, since the numbers of exchange students are still not very large.

Erasmus, a key European programme promoting mobility at higher educational level

The Erasmus programme (see the inset below), which was intended to open the door to mobility at higher educational level, is actually far from having reached the goals announced by its promoters: although it was expected to involve 10% of all students, only 1% of the

French students enrolled at higher educational institutions made use of this scheme during the university year 2004-2005 (see the graph opposite). Since almost 22 000 French students pursued their studies abroad during that period, France ranks second after Germany among European countries in terms of the number of mobile students. The host countries to which French youths travelled in the framework of the Erasmus programme in 2004-2005 were mainly the largest European countries: Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy. These four countries alone hosted two thirds of the French Erasmus participants. The main discipline pursued by these students during their stay abroad was company management, which accounted for 30% of the participants. This discipline was followed by engineering and technology (14%), modern languages and philology (11%) and some specialized branches of the social sciences (8%) and Law (7%); whereas very few students in science, medicine, communications and information science, geography, geology and the educational and teacher training disciplines showed mobility of this kind.

Lecturers play a decisive role

Among the many different actors involved in organizing Erasmus exchanges for students, university lecturers play a particularly decisive role. They are responsible for developing partnerships between their own university and other European universities as well as for setting up agreements about these exchanges, working very much upstream of the students' subsequent mobility processes. Farther downstream, they also have to act as coordinators. In this framework, they are in charge of selecting the candidates most likely to benefit from the exchange grants provided for this purpose. Before the students' departure, their tutors have to decide what courses they will take, what tests they will have to sit at the host university, and what modules will be validated when they return, in keeping with European Credit Transfer System principles. Lecturers themselves are able to go and work in other countries in the framework of the Erasmus programme. They can do so for a period of one to eight weeks, and a foreign partner must also do likewise at the most suitable time, since the programme is based on the principle of reciprocity. Lecturers can also make preparatory visits in order to set up contacts for the following year, and they can visit their Erasmus students during their stay abroad. Mobility of this kind gives rise to some problems, since lecturers are not replaced during their absence, and they therefore tend to carry out visits of this kind during their own holidays. Lecturers therefore play an essential role in Erasmus programmes. However, they show very little mobility in practice. In 2004-2005, 21 000 European

The Erasmus programme

The Erasmus programme is open to all students who have completed their first year of university studies and are either citizens of one of the eligible countries (the Member States of the European Union or the European Free Trade Association), or have the status of permanent residents, stateless persons or political refugees. The studies carried out in this framework in other European countries are recognized and accredited as counting towards a French diploma by the students' home university, thanks to the European credit transfer system and the study contracts signed by all Erasmus students before their departure with the two universities involved. The Erasmus programme is also intended for members of staff at higher educational establishments as well as for members of public and private bodies with which these establishments cooperate in the framework of thematic networks (research centres and bodies, associations, local authorities, firms, social partners, etc.).

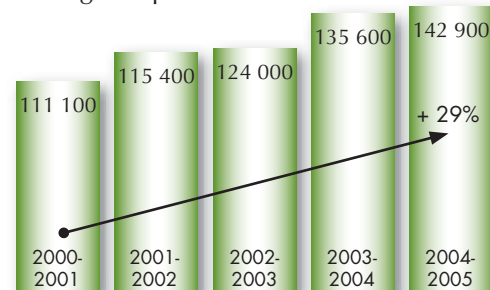
lecturers benefited from the Erasmus programme. There were only 2 100 French participants, amounting to a mere 3% of the total number.

Students' and lecturers' mobility: correlations and disparities

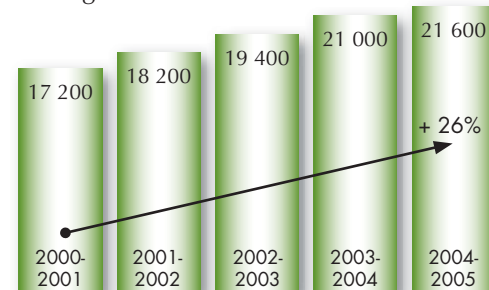
This lack of enthusiasm for the Erasmus scheme is all the more deplorable since university students' geographical mobility seems to be closely linked to their lecturers' own mobility: between 2000 and 2005, the numbers of students and lecturers participating in the Erasmus programme were exactly correlated, at the level of both France and Europe as a whole (see the inset below): the number of Erasmus students increased with the number of lecturers taking part in these exchanges. On average, there were seven exchange students in Europe for every lecturer participating in the scheme. In France, the ratio was slightly higher: ten students for every lecturer. However, between 2000 and 2005, the rate of progression of the number of French lecturers involved in Erasmus exchanges did not keep up with the figures recorded in the rest of Europe, and this was also the case with students (see the graph below). Considerable regional disparities certainly exist in France. Aligning the patterns of mobility shown by lecturers and students can shed light on the real situation in countries, regions and establishments which are often hailed as champions of mobility. The Ile-de-France region is a case in point. This region, which includes several leading universities, is that which sends the largest numbers of students and lecturers to other countries (see the map on page 3). However, in terms of the ratio between the numbers of exchange students and lecturers, Ile-de-France ranks only fourteenth among all the French regions (see the graph below). Lecturers' mobility therefore has relatively little

■ Number of participants per year in the Erasmus programme

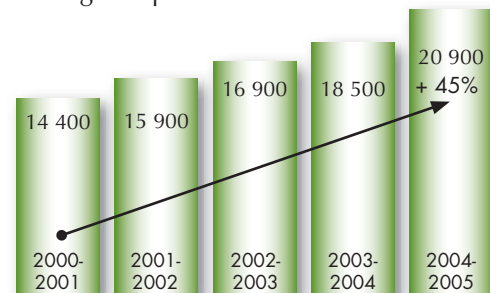
Among European students



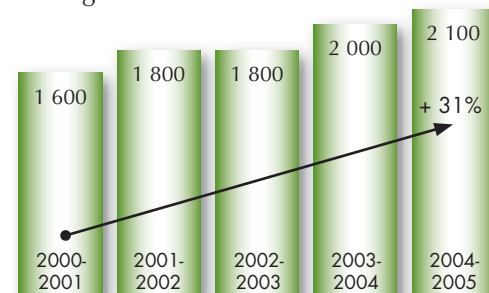
Among French students



Among European lecturers



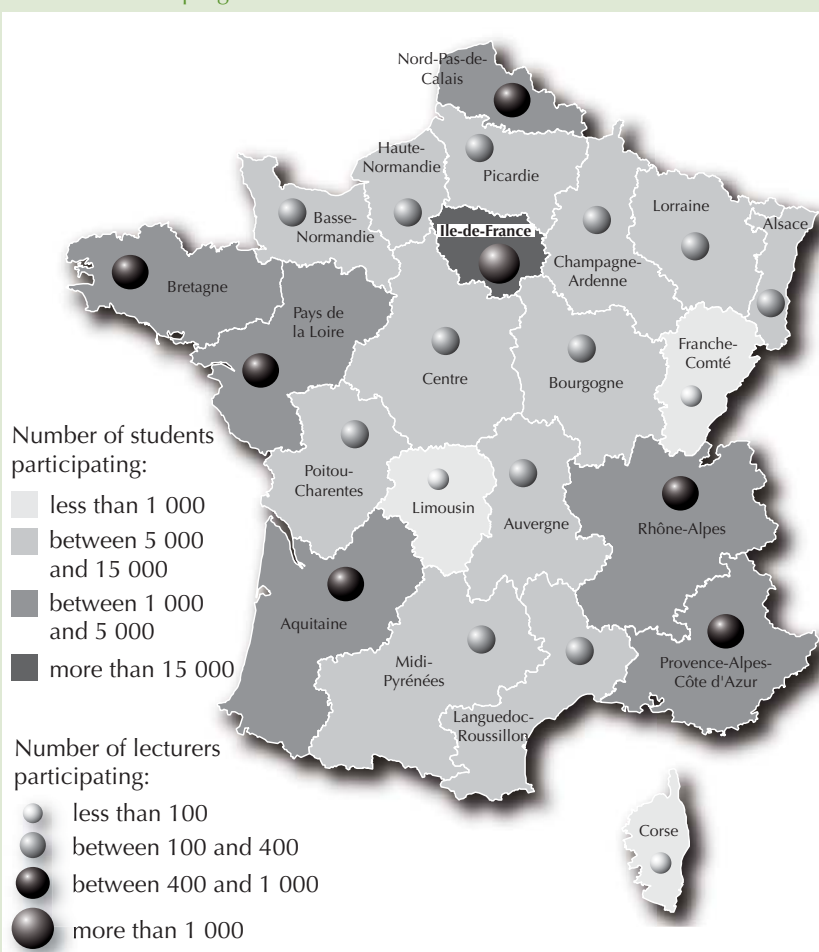
Among French lecturers



Data source: the European Union's Europe-Education-Training France Agency. Data processing: Céreq 2007

■ Patterns of mobility all over France

Number of French students and lecturers participating in the Erasmus programme in 2004-2005



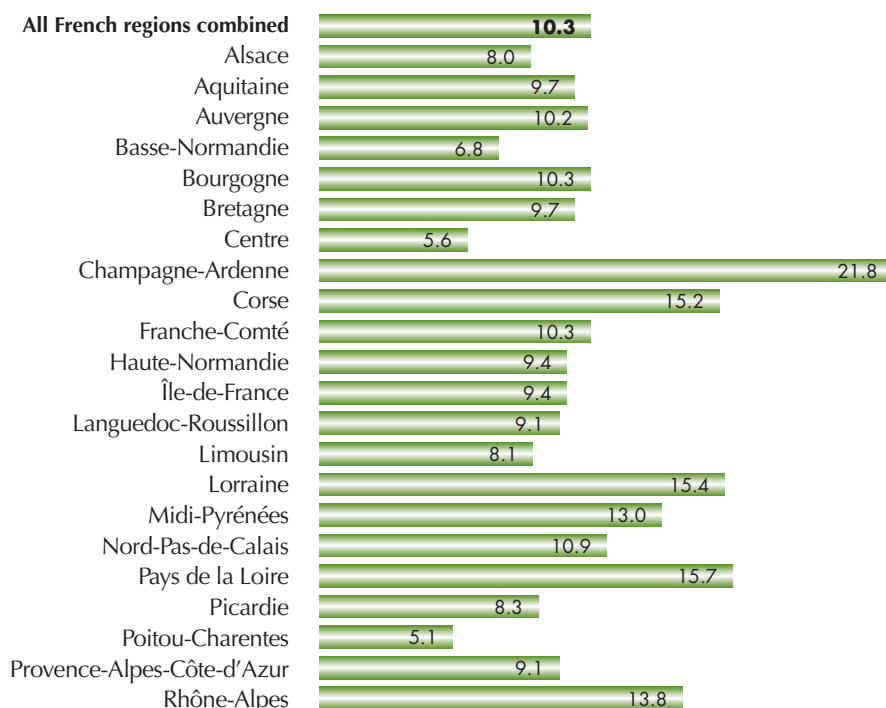
Data source: the European Union's Europe-Education-Training France Agency. Data processing: Céreq 2007

Correlated patterns of mobility

The existence of correlations between lecturers' and students' patterns of mobility has been tested and confirmed using three different statistical tests, namely Kendall's, Pearson's and Spearman's tests with a 5% significance level. The coefficient of correlation was found to be 97%, 98% and 99%, respectively, in these tests.

■ Ratio between lecturers' and students' mobility

Ratio between the number of students and the number of lecturers participating in the Erasmus programme in 2004-2005



Data source: the European Union's Europe-Education-Training France Agency. Data processing: Céreq 2007

impact on students' mobility in this region. On the other hand, very few students and lecturers from Franche-Comté, Limousin and Corsica have participated in exchanges with other countries: and yet the ratio between the numbers of mobile students and lecturers is higher in Corsica (and slightly higher in Franche-Comté) than in Île-de-France. The regions where this ratio is the highest are Champagne-Ardenne, Pays de la Loire and Lorraine. Students' and lecturers' patterns of mobility might seem to be separate processes *a priori*. However, although they obey different logics, they are actually correlated. In this context, lecturers should therefore be encouraged to show greater mobility, especially as their mobility takes place upstream of students' mobility. The university networks in other countries with which French universities have set up partnerships in the framework of the Erasmus exchange system are indeed the fruit of lecturers' contacts with these countries. In addition, it is they who make the decisions about arranging Erasmus agreements for their students. If their lecturers have no contacts with other countries and universities, students will not be able to benefit from the opportunity of studying abroad. Lecturers' occupational and social networks are therefore of prime importance in this respect. The more they are involved in European networks, the more likely they are to be mobile, and the better they will be able to offer their students a wide range of possible destinations, and thus increase their geographical

mobility. It still remains to be determined whether the current tendency for French universities to become more autonomous is going to generate renewed interest in the development of the Erasmus scheme.

Igor Agbossou, Sophie Carel and Patrice Caro

A look at the Erasmus programme

The results presented in this issue of the Newsletter were based on a survey on the geographical mobility of ERASMUS students carried out by several laboratories, including the Théma group, which hosts Céreq's associated centre in the Franche-Comté region. This interdisciplinary survey involved sociologists, geographers, psychologists, linguists and educational specialists from France and other countries. For information about Théma on the internet, see: thema.univ-fcomte.fr.



Further reading

- "L'université de Franche-Comté dans le cadre des échanges Erasmus" (Franche-Comté universities in the framework of Erasmus exchanges), I. Agbossou and S. Carel, *Images de Franche-Comté*, no. 35, June 2007.
- "Le programme Erasmus en France, en Italie et en Angleterre. Sélection des étudiants et compétences migratoires" (The Erasmus programme in France, Italy and the UK. Student selection and migratory competences), M. Ballatore, *Cahiers de la recherche sur l'éducation et les savoirs*, no. 5, October 2006.
- *Mobilité Erasmus et communication interculturelle* (Erasmus mobility and intercultural communications), M. Anquetil, Peter Lang publications, 2006.
- "L'étudiant européen voyageur, un nouvel étranger" (The travelling European student, a new kind of foreigner), E. Murphy-Lejeune, published by Didier, 2005.
- "Genre et mobilité des étudiants en Europe" (Gender and student mobility in Europe), N. Cattani, *Espace, populations, sociétés*, no. 2004-1, 2004.
- *Des étudiants européens. Erasmus et l'aventure de l'altérité* (European students. Erasmus and the adventure of otherness), V. Papatsiba, Peter Lang publications, 2003.

ISSN - 1156 2366

Céreq

Direction de la publication : Michel Quéré. Rédacteur en chef : Jean-Louis Kirsch. Traduction et adaptation : Jessica Blanc. Pao : Dominique Bally. Reproduction of (part or all of) the material published in this issue is authorised on condition the source is explicitly mentioned. Dépôt légal 2^e trimestre 2008.

10, place de la Joliette,
BP 21321,
13567 Marseille cedex 02.
Tél. 04 91 13 28 28.
Fax 04 91 13 28 80.
<http://www.cereq.fr>

Briefing

New Publications



✓ website:
www.ires-fr.org

Politiques menées au nom de l'emploi et mutations des ressources des travailleurs : une comparaison européenne

[Employment policies and changes in workers' resources: a comparative European study]

> Jean-Paul Higélé and Andreana Khristova

La revue de l'IRES, no. 53, 2007/1

In this study, it is proposed to examine how labour market policies function in Europe. However, the differences between the purported goals of these policies and the existence of various kinds of official employment policies make it impossible to determine their main effects on human resources. The authors therefore propose to approach these policies from a different angle by defining them as policies changing the nature and the amount of workers' resources. In the light of this reinterpretation, comparisons are made between policies designed to promote employment in countries all over Europe. These policies are of two main kinds: they focus either on subsidised wages or on directly imposed wage increases.

La Revue de l'IRES can be obtained directly from the publisher:

Institut de recherches économiques et sociales, 16, bd du Mont d'Est, 93192 Noisy-le-Grand cedex, phone: 01 48 15 18 90, fax 01 48 15 19 18, e-mail : info@ires-fr.org, website: www.ires-fr.org

L'importance des petites entreprises dans les processus d'insertion professionnelle des jeunes

[The role of small firms in youth transition to work]

> Elyes Bentabet

in *Pme, emploi et relations sociales. France-Maghreb*

[SMEs, employment and social relations in France and the Maghreb]

A. Abedou, A. Bouyacoub, M. Lallement, M. Madoui (editors)

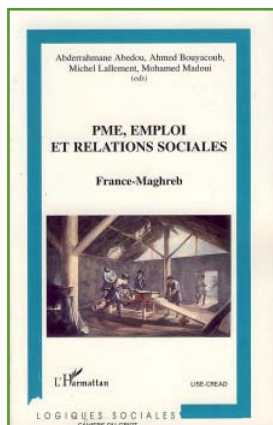
Published by L'Harmattan, in the "Logiques sociales" series, 2007

How do SMEs contribute to creating jobs? What kinds of jobs are created at these firms? What kinds of SMEs create the largest numbers of jobs? To what extent do these firms provide youths and the unemployed with opportunities for transition to work? In this collective volume, Elyes Bentabet compares two rather dissimilar situations, those of France and Algeria, in terms of SMEs' contribution to youth transition to work processes. This was not a simple task because the risk of making condescending recommendations and giving facile advice had to be avoided, as well as that of using too abstract language bearing no relation to the current situation in Algeria. The author therefore proposed to take stock of youth transition to work practices at small firms, while refraining from holding up any ideal models as goals to be targeted at all costs. The societal specificities are no doubt too strong to be able to trace common practices between French and Algerian firms. The author therefore proposed to analyse the extent to which French practices are liable to provide a response to the current preoccupations of economic decision-makers and the heads of small firms in Algeria, and how they might help the latter to find new solutions. This article consists of two parts. In the first part, entitled "The hard path to the first job: youths between unemployment and casual work" the author describes the main problems involved in young people's transition to work on the French labour market and on the European market in general. In the second part, which deals with "Very small firms: the main opportunity for transition to work and the acquisition of skills for almost one third of French youths", he presents the results of a survey on the actual contribution of these firms to youths' transition to work and to their vocational training and the acquisition of skills.

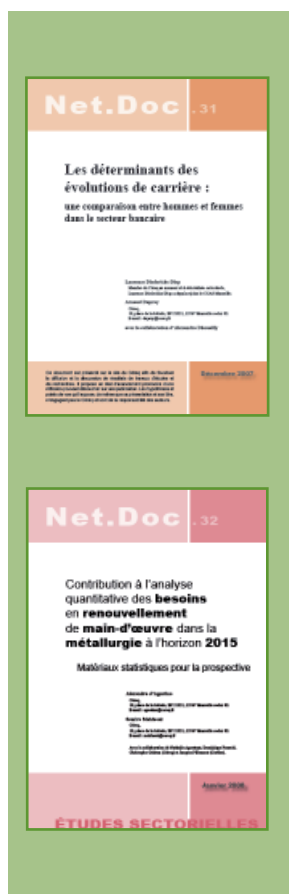
This volume (in French) can be obtained from the publisher at the following address:

Editions l'Harmattan, 21 bis, rue des Ecoles, 75005 Paris

phone: 01 46 34 13 71, fax: 01 43 25 82 03, website: www.editions-harmattan.fr



✓ website: www.editions-harmattan.fr



INTERNET "Net.Doc"

Les déterminants des évolutions de carrière : une comparaison entre hommes et femmes dans le secteur bancaire

[Factors determining career paths: comparisons between men and women in the banking sector]

Net.Doc 31, December 2007

> Laurence Diederichs-Diop and Arnaud Dupray

In the last collective agreement signed by the "Association Française des Banques", occupational equality between men and women was included among the general principles governing people's right to equal wages regardless of their gender, ethnic origins, birth, opinions, customs, beliefs, state of health and any disablement from which they may suffer. However, wage differentials are frequently observed in the annual wage surveys between people with identical occupations. Apart from discussing the extent of these differentials, the authors of this document examine their components, their causes and all the factors in general liable to affect the career advancement of female employees and their masculine colleagues during their occupational paths.

Contribution à l'analyse quantitative des besoins en renouvellement de main-d'œuvre dans la métallurgie à l'horizon 2015. Matériaux statistiques pour la prospective

[Analysing the need for quantitative workforce renewal in the metallurgical industries by 2015. Some prospective statistical tools]

Net.Doc 32, January 2008

> Alexandra d'Agostino

How can the occupations involved in the metallurgical industries be described and how are the various qualification levels structured? How have these characteristics changed since 1994? What workforce renewal requirements are going to result from the age pyramid and the forthcoming retirement of older employees? What effects do human resource management and workforce renewal practices at metalworking companies have on recruitment, the characteristics of the employees recruited and the patterns of occupational (inter-branch and promotion-related) mobility? What are the characteristics of the qualifying training supply in the main occupational fields involved in metalworking? How has this supply changed during the last ten years? This aim of this study by Céreq was to account for the main characteristics of the metalworking branch and to predict the medium-term requirements. In diagnosing the present situation, this study is upstream of the prospective phase, but at the same time, it is downstream of this phase, since it provides food for thought about the future outlook and possible scenarios.

L'approche par compétence, technologie de rationalisation pédagogique. Le cas de la formation professionnelle au Québec

[The competence approach, a technological tool for pedagogical rationalization]

Net.Doc 36, February 2008

> Sylvie Monchatre

The aim of defining vocational training and qualification standards using a competence-based approach has been intensively pursued for a long time in Quebec, since this process was launched in the early seventies. Based on the history of this process and its contribution to the cognitive rationalization of curricula, the author describes the competence-based approach as a technological tool which can be used at the interface between education and employment to produce consensus educational and occupational standards, and contributes constantly to converting people's lifelong experience into duly accredited skills.

Valeur du diplôme. Place et rôle dans les parcours scolaires et professionnels

[The value of diplomas. Their place and role in educational and occupational paths]

Net.Doc 37, March 2008

> Thierry Berthet, Gérard Boudesseu, Isabelle Borrás, Cyril Coinaud, Yvette Grelet, Agnès Legay, Claudine Romani, Céline Vivent.

The challenge facing diplomas, defined as a means of providing people with durable employment in line with the development of the vocational training supply, needs to be redefined in terms of real situations, taking into account how appropriate prospective users are liable to find them. The ideas presented here come under two main headings: the options really available to young people and their families, since factors such as their social and ethnic origins have specific effects; and the ways in which the demand for education and vocational training develops, is expressed and takes form. The main aim of this study is therefore to examine in detail the tension expressed in a diploma between the social demands of young people and their families and the efficiency of the diploma in terms of the qualifications in demand on the labour market.



La recherche de liens entre la formation et l'emploi : une institution et sa revue – un point de vue

[Searching for links between training and employment: an institution and its journal in retrospect]

> Lucie Tanguy

The author of this paper starts by briefly recalling how Céreq was created, the missions with which this organisation was entrusted, and how the journal "Formation-Emploi" came into existence a few years later. She then describes and discusses how "the links between training and employment" gradually developed into an important field of research. Continuing vocational training turned out to be an active principle which contributed greatly during the 80s and 90s to the process of industrial modernization. Equally vocational training is still being called upon to mediate changes in the fields of work and employment, but although it was initially presented as an individual right, it has now become more of a prerequisite for keeping one's job. Vocational training can therefore be said to have political aspects.

L'ancien, l'établi, l'émergent et le nouveau : quelle dynamique des activités professionnelles ?

[The old, the established, the emergent and the new: the dynamics of occupational activities]

> Didier Demazière

Old, established, emergent and new: these terms are frequently used to qualify occupational activities. After noting the increasing numbers of monographs being published on various occupational fields, it was proposed to look at the meaning of these terms. The following conclusions emerged from this analysis of occupational dynamics and the processes involved: the division of labour is a continuous, never-ending process, occupational specialisation includes moral aspects, the barriers between labour markets are purely relative, regulated professions interact with more fuzzy occupations, professionalisation is an ambiguous, paradoxical procedure, and professionalism involves heterogeneous, highly segmented processes.

Justesse et justice dans les recrutements

[Fairness and rightness in recruitment Practices]

> François Eymard-Duvernay

The present interdisciplinary study focuses on the assessment and selection processes involved in recruitment, which are analysed at various levels: at the cognitive level (the data have to be properly measured), at the social level (how competence is viewed depends on the specific social context), and at the ethical level (competence assessments must comply with the principles of fairness). The concept of competence conventions involves all these aspects of the assessment process. The author also refers to some recent empirical studies relating to this question.

De la flexicurité à la sécurité sociale professionnelle. L'emploi entre mobilité et stabilité

[From flexicurity to occupational social security. Employment between mobility and stability]

> François Gaudu

This paper deals with the current debate in France about reforming employment laws in line with European recommendations. Two approaches known as "occupational social security" and "flexicurity", the contents of which are very similar, are being defended in both the French and European settings. The author first describes the strategies involved in flexicurity before examining the rather hesitant initial attempts being made in France to put them into practice. It is not yet possible to say which of the two possible outcomes will win the day: a descending spiral process or the emergence of a new system which is in keeping with Western European traditions.

Vraies et fausses solutions aux discriminations

[Right and wrong solutions to discrimination problems]

> Jean-François Amadieu

Discriminatory practices are multiple, cumulative and increasingly frequent in the field of employment, especially at recruitment level. France has not been taking a particularly active approach to this problem and was slow to join the war on discrimination. The diversity of the forms of discrimination and the gravity of its effects are such that we must avoid focusing solely on gender related and racial problems. Some firms have been attempting to diagnose these problems and adopting new human resource management approaches. These policies are obviously quite efficient, but it is doubtful whether they will flourish for long because policies based on diversity and positive discrimination might interfere with attempts to improve equal chances.

Professionaliser la formation : enjeux, modalités, difficultés

[Professionalising vocational training: the challenges, modes and problems involved]

> Richard Wittorski

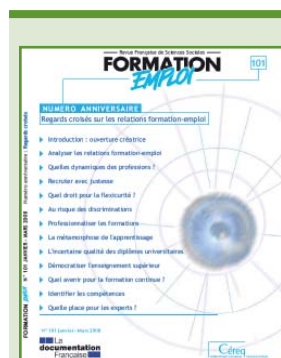
Professionalisation is obviously in vogue at present, since it is being promoted by national and European policies on how initial and continuing vocational training should be organised, as well as being upheld by the public sectors. The author looks at the reasons for the move which has been going on for several decades to professionalise the initial and continuing training supply in France, the modes involved in the measures adopted, and the problems arising when it is attempted to put the principles of professionalisation into practice.

Apprentissage : une singulière métamorphose

[Apprenticeship: a strange Metamorphosis]

> Gilles Moreau

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



■ This issue may be ordered from La Documentation française.

- Issue price: 16 €.
- Special issue: 20 €.
- One-year subscription (4 issues): 56.20 € for France, 59.80 € for Europe, 60.90 € for the French overseas departments and territories, 64.10 € elsewhere.

Apprenticeship has been increasing steadily during the last thirty years at French firms. After being threatened with extinction in the 60s, it has by now become a recognized vocational training pathway. The economic context, the reforms and the fact that young people's school-to-work transition was so difficult help to explain this unexpected turn of events. The re-emergence of apprenticeship is nevertheless quite strange: its increasing segmentation, its persistent inaccessibility to girls and youths from immigrant families, and the growing weight of social and educational traditions make the metamorphosis somewhat incomplete. It is also rather paradoxical, since the rebirth of apprenticeship has been mainly achieved by accentuating its more scholarly aspects, i.e., by institutionalising it and making it more scholastic.

Des mondes incertains : les universités, les diplômés et l'emploi

[Uncertain spheres: universities, diplomas and employment]

> Georges Felouzis

The transition to work of young higher educational graduates is an increasingly complex process because of the changes simultaneously affecting universities and the labour market. The vocational training and transition to work aspects of this problem are too frequently approached separately in the field of social science, although these two large branches of sociological research involve the same mechanisms and obey roughly the same logics. This does not simply mean that each of them can be taken to explain the other, but rather that both can be accounted for in similar terms. The author claims that the reason for the uncertainty of university graduates' transition to work is not so much that there are too many of these diplomas going around, but rather that there is some uncertainty about the quality of the diplomas.

Enseignement supérieur : la démocratisation scolaire en panne

[Higher education: the breakdown of democratisation]

> Stéphane Beaud

The aim of this paper was to examine the changes undergone by the French higher educational system, especially as regards its tendency to split up into three increasingly separate parts: élitist training colleges, short technical courses known as IUTs and STSs (University Institute of Technology and Higher Techniciens courses), and University undergraduate courses, using an ethnographic approach. The results of field studies carried out in student circles are presented along with a description of the experience of a lecturer conducting research at a popular French university. This analysis focuses in particular on the case of students of humble origin.

Les changements possibles du système de formation continue

[Changes in the French continuing vocational training system]

> Claude Dubar

The French system of vocational training is based on a blend between training and employment, company-funded training and short periods of work experience rather than on models involving long periods of publicly funded vocational training (evening courses in many cases) as a means of social promotion or those privileging cultural development, citizenship and lifelong learning. The legislation passed in 2002 and 2004 was designed to rebalance the system. Changes of four possible kinds have been envisaged: increasing the responsibility of adults for their own training, reducing inequalities, improving the efficiency of vocational training for employees and the unemployed, and focusing on the demand for training rather than the supply, especially at regional level. This review of the conditions on which these changes depend leads to moderately optimistic conclusions.

La notion de compétence dans les activités de validation des acquis de l'expérience

[The concept of competence as applied to VAE activities]

> Patrick Mayen and Jean-François Métral

The authors study the concept of competence in the context of various categories of professionals working in the field of VAE (validation of past experience), including the members of juries, mentors, advisers at outreach units and those supervising candidates' activities. In the first part of this paper, they examine the extent to which the concept of competence is explicitly used in these various activities. In the second part, it is proposed first to analyse the arguments candidates want to put forward in terms of their past experience and activities, and how they go about this task. The authors then attempt to identify what the juries are looking for in terms of candidates' past experience and activities, and how they go about this task. These findings help to shed light on the concept of competence as it is actually applied to work experience and how it is referred to and assessed.

L'expert, entre le savant et le politique : l'efficacité des rapports d'expertise sur l'emploi et la formation

[Experts between the demands of academics and politicians: the effects of expert reports on training and employment]

> Jacques Freyssinet

Political instances frequently have recourse to supposedly independent experts, who are expected to make use of the latest knowledge available and put forward recommendations. Experts involved in actors' complex strategic processes are torn between the ethics of informed conviction and the ethics of political responsibility. Three examples in the field of training and employment show why and under what conditions experts are consulted, and shed light on the academic and political factors necessarily underlying the recommendations put forward and the reasons why these are adopted or not.